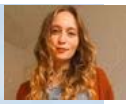

Company goes into administration

by James Perkins

17th Apr 2010 2:05 AM

PETER van Lieshout is not happy about the extra gardening he will have to do should Forest Enterprise Australia (FEA) Plantations stop paying its bills.

The Tasmanian company has gone into voluntary liquidation and should it not fulfil its contractual obligations, Mr van Lieshout will regain control of 300 hectares of land at Kunghur he leased six years ago.

The land is home to about 240,000 hardwood eucalypts worth about $10.5million which still have another 14 years left to grow until they are ready for harvest.

“To undertake maintenance of the area is a very expensive exercise,” Mr van Lieshout said. “I can’t really expect to see any money in the bank for 10 to 12 years; I would have preferred this didn’t happen.

“I am not overjoyed about it.”

The debacle has put a number of jobs in limbo.

FEA Plantations has a permanent staff of 20 at Lismore plus 40 contractors and about 70 casuals. Plans for 200 new jobs at a proposed Kyogle processing plant are also in doubt.

Mr van Lieshout, husband of Tweed Shire Councillor Joan van Lieshout, said most Tweed people involved in the industry were contractors and would still have work in the long term.

situation who may start a co-operative.

Tweed Daily News

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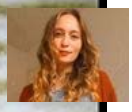
Broncos wary of loose Moose
an hour ago



'Living in a nightmare': failed community leaves families broke

by arylko

12th Aug 2017 8:27 AM | Updated: 13th Aug 2017 11:35 AM

74 4

A COLLAPSED shared-living community at Mt Burrell serves as a warning to potential investors of alternative housing schemes.

ADVERTISING

With its court-ordered dismantling this week, the Bhula Bhula Intentional Community has left in its wake at least 20 financially ruined investors and a litany of complex legal clashes.

The NSW Land and Environmental Court ordered the community to "cease habitation", remove its makeshift homes, caravans, spiritual yurts and unauthorised roadworks by August 7.

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VIDEO: Families' dreams destroyed in failed 'alternative community' >

VIDEO: New promises at Mt Warning Eco Village >

Unauthorised works, which were demolished after legal action by the Tweed Shire Council.

Picture: Contributed /Tweed Shire Council

First marketed in 2014 by the Truthology movement, the commune at a 250ha former farm at 3222 Kyogle Rd was purchased by Wollumbin Horizons Pty Ltd for $1.175 million in 2015.

It promised three- to five-acres of private use land from $120,000 to $180,000 for each unit holder in the village which offered "living harmoniously", "co-operative power" an "amazing Community Centre" and "much more".

However no council development applications were lodged.

Tweed Shire Council director of Planning Vince Connell confirmed "multiple, recurring complaints from several adjoining and surrounding owners all related to unauthorised works" were received from mid-2015 onwards.

In July this year, ASIC records show Wollumbin Horizons had been placed into voluntary administration.

Now former villagers are desperate to get their money back.

TURNING AWAY: Sarah Kirkwood at her dream family home site in Mt Burrell, before the collapse of the Bhula Bhula Intentional Community.

Picture: Contributed

A Byron Bay woman, who does not want to be named, said she lost $320,000 after her non-DA approved home at Bhula Bhula had to be knocked down.

She said the community was plagued by infighting, bullying and squabbling factions, some of whom incorrectly believed a DA could be granted retrospectively.

"We all took a risk and thought we could pull it off," she said.

"I am the one who lost the most," she said.

Investors were lured with the concept of a self-sustainable community, with permaculture gardens and shared labour.

Former investor Neil Pascoe and his partner poured $80,000 into the project in 2014 when it was marketed at an "anti-government" Freedom Summit at Byron Bay.

"Everyone wanted to get together and make something amazing, to grow food, and to try to create an oasis," Mr Pascoe said.

"We wanted to live in self-sustainable container ships - earth ships - and beautiful log cabins.

"Now people are on the verge of losing their life savings, living in a nightmare."

Suffolk Park resident Emanuele Agus and his wife claimed to have invested $120,000 into Bhula Bhula after they heard about an "off-the- grid community" from a friend.

"Things started (to) go wrong when people started asking too many questions about the increasing amount of money missing, and the lack of financial transparency."

According to emails seen by the Tweed Daily News, a man described by some as the co-founder of the community, Mark Darwin, promoted units for $180,000 each in the 'intentional community' via email in 2014, under his "Truthology" and Freedom Summits movements.

Prominent Bhula Bhula Intentional Community member, Mark Darwin.

Picture: Contributed / Facebook

But in a statement to the TDN, Mr Darwin denied any leadership over the Bhula Bhula community, instead saying his involvement was limited to that of an interested "community member".

Mr Darwin said documents signed by members when joining the trust clearly stated there was no DA given or implied.

The collapsed community leaves behind a trail of abusive online blogs, counter legal claims and complaints to ASIC, the Legal Services Commissioner and local police, who have visited the site at least once.

A Federal Court decision on June 29 ruled former investor Gillian Linda Norman was entitled to her investment of $120,000 minus $4,160 in costs for the clean up her plot on the land.

PICTURESQUE: Drone aerial view of the Mt Warning Eco Village at Mt Burrell, tucked away behind the Mt Warning General Story. INSET: Entry gate.

Picture: Scott Powick

Meanwhile, next door to the defunct Bhula Bhula community, a separate 3,500 acre land-share project has sprouted.

Mr Darwin said the Mt Warning Eco Village - owned by several entities - now has a sale contract to buy Bhula Bhula land for more than $1million.

"This means that any disgruntled community members can leave with their funds paid back in full, and that all creditors including council will also be paid in full," he said.

> "It's been a very challenging time, but one that has brought about many lessons for improvement."

Villagers bought into the scheme through units under a trustee, led by a director and steering committee.

Bhula Bhula had five directors, including unit holder Adrian Brennock, who did not respond to phone calls.

A viewing platform at the new Mt Warning Eco Village.

Picture: Contributed

What do you think? editorial@tweeddaily news.com.au

Timeline

2014: 'Bhula Bhula' meaning harmony, is marketed on Facebook, through Truthology and Freedom Summits movements.

2015: 250ha rural block at 3222 Kyogle Rd, Mt Burrell, is bought for $1.175 as land-share project.

2015 - 2016: Some unit holders begin developing

Complaints to Tweed Shire Council pile up

2017: Land and Environment court orders community to "cease habitation".

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Northern Star

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